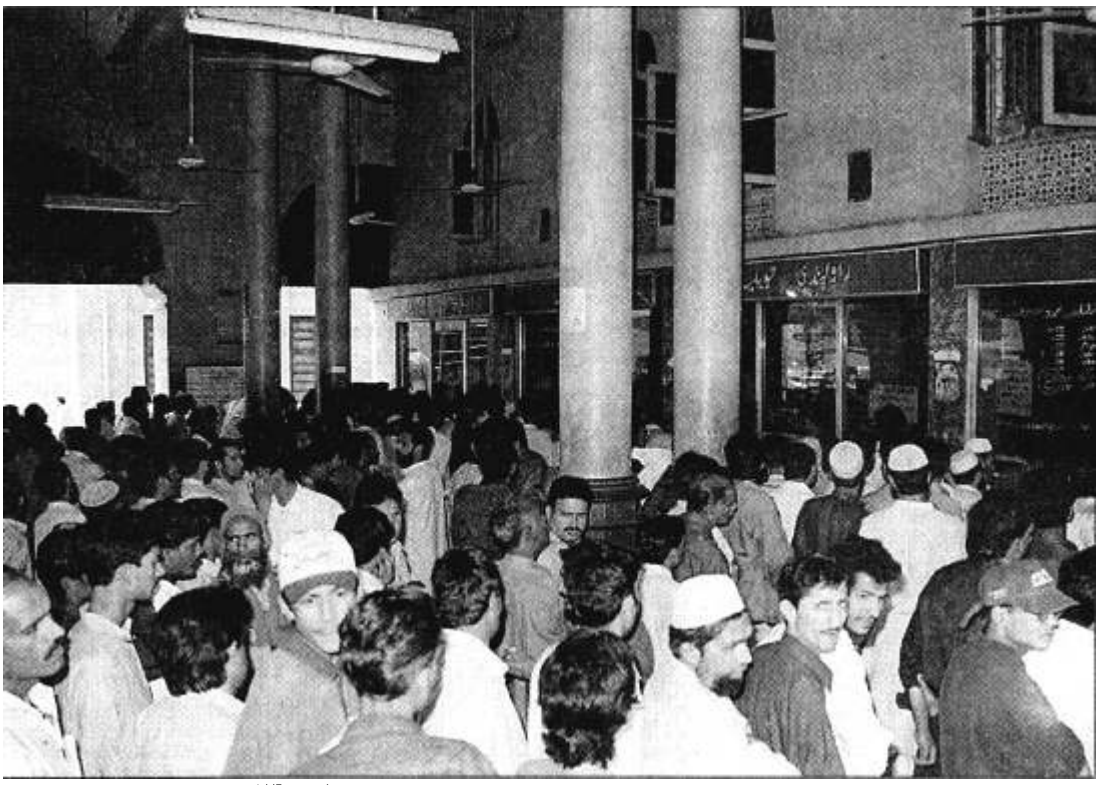

PRE-EID rush at the reservation counters of the City Station. — Dawn

Scuffle breaks out at railway station

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI, Jan 1: A scuffle broke out between railway and naval police at the City Station on Friday afternoon after the naval police allegedly tried to get past the long queues to make railway reservations for Eid.

Fist fights have become a regular occurrence at the railway booking offices, where passenger trains for upcountry destinations are fully booked after Jan 15. Two ranger mobiles have been deployed at the City Station at the request of railway officials to control the eruption of clashes at the passenger reservation office.

Although Pakistan Railways proposes to run a special Eid train for passengers on the 14th or 15th Jan, it is still not proving sufficient for passengers planning to travel to interior Sindh, Punjab and the Northwest Frontier province in order to celebrate Eid.

One officer told *Dawn* that he had instructed the rangers deputed at the City Station to check every 10 persons standing in the queue at the ticketing reservation counter, "since they are the ones involved in hoarding and selling of tickets."

Railway sources alleged the situation had been aggravated since the area MNA, Haleem Siddiqi, had deputed more than 30 members of the Khidmat Committee to monitor hoarding and blackmarketing of tickets.

The Khidmat Committee members were observed to be using their Khidmat card in order to book tickets for themselves and their relatives just before Eid. One lady at the reservation counter at the City Station complained on Thursday that she had come under intense pressure by the committee for not making reservations according to their wishes.

The ticketing sources claimed that despite the Eid rush outside interference had caused the daily revenue from bookings to fall from Rs2.5-3 million to Rs1.5 million.

According to the railway employees at the Cantt station, since the Khidmat Committee members who had intercepted coolies for blackmarketing tickets two days ago had done so bypassing the railway police and the area subdivisional magistrate, it caused resentment among the employees.

The president of Railway Workers Inqilabi Union, Manzoor Ahmad Razi, demanded that the interference from outsiders be ended.